

ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

May 23, 2003

For immediate release

1. **Beach posted at Lake Geode; re-testing being done at Springbrook, Backbone remains closed**
2. **Pump failure at Audubon results in bypass into Blue Grass Creek**
3. **Manure release halted in Franklin County**
4. **Diesel fuel clean up continues at Arcadia Limestone**
5. **CRP general signup deadline extended to June 13th**
6. **HHM and solid waste education project kicks-off with stakeholders' meeting**

BEACH POSTED AT LAKE GEODE; RE-TESTING BEING DONE AT SPRINGBROOK; BACKBONE REMAINS CLOSED

DES MOINES — A swimming advisory has been posted for the beach at Lake Geode in Henry County. Swimming advisories at Rock Creek in Jasper County and Lake Darling in Washington County have been removed.

A high reading was also recorded at Springbrook State Park in Guthrie County. That beach will be re-sampled over the weekend with results expected back early next week.

The beach at Backbone State Park in Delaware County remains closed until further notice

The beach at Lake Geode had an E. coli bacteria reading of 3,000. That beach now exceeds the standard for a geometric mean of 126 comprised of five samples over a 30 day period. The reading at Springbrook was 320 which exceeds the one sample standard of 235. The beach at Springbrook will be re-tested because it is not on the list of eight lakes in Iowa that have had high bacteria levels in the past.

The beach at Backbone had a reading of 250 this week and will remain closed while the DNR continues to investigate the wastewater treatment plant at Strawberry Point for alleged violations of its discharge permit. The department is investigating whether effluent from the plant is receiving adequate treatment prior to being discharged into a

stream flowing to the Maquoketa River. Backbone Lake, an impoundment of the river, is located between three and four miles downstream from where wastewater treatment plant in Strawberry Point discharges.

Bacteria levels at Iowa's 28 other state park beaches are within acceptable levels.

Weekly beach monitoring results are posted on the DNR's website every Friday afternoon at <http://www.state.ia.us/dnr/organiza/ppd/beach2003.htm>.

For more information, contact Kevin Baskins at (515) 281-8395 or Mary Skopec, 319-335-1575.

###

PUMP FAILURE AT AUDUBON RESULTS IN BYPASS INTO BLUE GRASS CREEK

AUDUBON — The city of Audubon was working Friday to repair a pumping station in its sewer system that was releasing only partially treated waste water into Blue Grass Creek.

The problem was reported to the DNR late Thursday morning after being discovered by city workers. A compressor failed on the pumping system as did an automatic alarm that is supposed to be activated when a problem occurs. As a result, sewage water was overflowing into the creek before it could return to the wastewater plant for treatment. City workers have had only limited access to the pumping station recently due to bridge work being done in the area so it is unknown how long the bypassing has been occurring.

Water overflowing from the pumping station does run through a series of three settling tanks before reaching Blue Grass Creek. By at least settling out solids, partial treatment would have occurred, reducing the concentration of contamination that would be reaching the stream, according to Kirk Mathis, an environmental specialist at the DNR's field office in Atlantic.

City workers had completed repairs to the equipment Friday afternoon. Water monitoring results from stream indicated ammonia levels did not reach toxic levels for aquatic life.

For more information, contact Kirk Mathis at (712) 243-1934.

###

MANURE RELEASE HALTED IN FRANKLIN COUNTY

MASON CITY — A commercial manure tanker and tractor overturned Thursday when an axle broke on the tanker southeast of Coulter in Franklin County.

Quick action on the part of Shane Tegtmeyer, owner of S.A.F.E. Applications in Ackley, prevented the 7200 gallons of manure in the tank from running down the road ditch to a stream.

After checking on the driver, Brad Brodale, Tegtmeyer located clean-up equipment and had it on the accident site in less than one-half hour. He built two dams around the overturned tanker, had people walking the ditch to find tile inlets and pumped manure into another tanker to prevent the liquid manure from reaching a stream.

“He did a great job in containing the spill, and recovered all but about 500 gallons that was excavated from the road ditch last night,” said Andrea Evelsizer, an environmental specialist from the DNR Mason City field office.

The recovered manure and excavated soil has been land applied.

Evelsizer said that one reason Tegtmeyer could respond so quickly was that he had an emergency phone list and was able to locate clean-up equipment from Iowa Select Farms.

As an active member in the newly formed Iowa Commercial Nutrient Applicators Association, Tegtmeyer knows the importance of keeping an emergency response checklist and emergency phone numbers.

The DNR will check the clean-up again on Friday.

For more information, contact Andrea Evelsizer at the DNR Mason City field office at 641-424-4073.

###

DIESEL FUEL CLEAN-UP CONTINUES AT ARCADIA LIMESTONE

ATLANTIC — The DNR has found a likely source of a diesel fuel leak that was discovered at Arcadia Limestone May 16.

Diesel fuel has been found in two of the seven monitoring wells that have been installed to determine the source and extent of groundwater contamination.

It appears that the contamination is coming from fuel that leaked from an underground pipe before it was replaced last December. I believe rainfall this spring has caused the fuel to surface from the saturated soil, said Alison Manz, an environmental specialist at the DNR’s Atlantic field office.

Manz said some contaminated soil has been removed from the site and replaced by sand. A sump pump was installed. About 4,000 gallons of contaminated groundwater has been

removed and will be treated to remove diesel fuel at the Des Moines wastewater treatment plant.

The spill has been contained and no petroleum product has reached a tributary to the East Boyer River since May 19.

“Arcadia Limestone has done a fantastic job of keeping the diesel fuel out of the tributary and is moving or replacing booms and absorbent pads every hour to keep the product out of the water,” said Manz.

Initially, the spill appeared to be coming from an above-ground storage tank or a leak in piping associated with the tank, but our tests this week point to residual contamination left from the pipe that was leaking last fall,” said Manz.

The DNR will continue to monitor the clean-up until the plume is identified and the clean-up is complete.

For more information, contact Kirk Mathis, environmental specialist at the DNR Atlantic field office, at 712/-243-1934 or at Kirk.Mathis@dnr.state.ia.us.

####

CRP GENERAL SIGN UP DEADLINE EXTENDED TO JUNE 13

DES MOINES — The USDA extended the deadline for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general sign up from May 30 to June 13. The extension was announced by Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman Tuesday afternoon.

Since most land in Iowa is privately owned, the CRP can have a tremendous impact on wildlife habitat and water quality. Keith Schilling, a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) geologist working out of Iowa City, has been studying what effect grass and other watershed improvements has on water quality. Schilling selected two similar sized watersheds in Jasper County – Walnut Creek and Squaw Creek.

Schilling said he found big differences in surface water quality when looking at sub-watersheds. On average, the portion of the Walnut Creek watershed containing the restored prairie exports one-half the nitrate as row crop dominated watersheds. Walnut Creek has lower nitrate levels and is statistically improved for pesticide runoff. He said overall, Walnut Creek, which flows through the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge and has nearly 20 percent of its land in restored prairie, is gradually improving.

Ken Herring, private lands program supervisor with the DNR’s wildlife bureau, said the new requirement for mid contract management on land enrolled in CRP has caused some concern from landowners. Previous CRP contracts did not require mid contract management such as strip disking or burning to keep the wildlife benefits.

“Mid contract management is a new feature put in to the CRP contracts specifically to benefit wildlife,” Herring said. “Landowners need to know that once they are enrolled in the program, they will work up a land management plan which will incorporate the best management activities for the land and the landowner will have input in the plan to make best suited for the farming practice. It’s something landowners have to do, but they do get paid for it.”

The general sign up is done at the local Farm Service Agency office.

“I would encourage landowners interested in the program to not wait until the last minute to sign up,” Herring said. “We [the DNR] have staff across the state to help landowners through the process in addition to the FSA.”

Herring said some of the initial confusion over a few issues early in the process has now been decided. For example, landowners re-enrolling existing CRP must include three native grass species to earn the additional 20 points rather than one or two species are previously discussed. The landowner will receive cost share money to do it.

###

HHM AND SOLID WASTE EDUCATION PROJECT KICKS-OFF WITH STAKEHOLDERS’ MEETING

DES MOINES — The Iowa DNR’s Energy and Waste Management Bureau has recently partnered with the Iowa Farm*A*Syst program to develop a farmstead self-assessment system and outreach program that will help rural residents manage hazardous materials and solid waste.

The program aims to promote voluntary action to prevent water pollution and illegal disposal of solid waste. The project will focus on providing action-oriented recommendations and practical management options for managing both hazardous materials and solid waste on rural farmsteads and acreages.

“We really intend for development of this program to be a collaborative process,” said Jamie Ridgely, Iowa Farm*A*Syst coordinator. “This is a tremendous opportunity for local waste management authorities to get involved and cooperate to develop a tool they can use as part of their local programming and outreach efforts. We’re excited by the chance to bring together some non-traditional partners in Iowa and create a program that will be a resource to rural families.”

The first major step for this project will be convening a stakeholders group to discuss and prioritize the most important waste management issues for rural residents and to make recommendations on content of the program materials. The group also will spend some time discussing the use and need for educational materials and how they are currently being distributed to Iowa’s rural families.

Anyone with an interest in hazardous materials or solid waste management in Iowa is invited to attend the stakeholders meeting, which will be held Tuesday, June 17, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Urbandale Public Library.

Iowa Farm*A*Syst is a voluntary farmstead assessment system developed by Iowa Farm Bureau Federation to help farmers and non-farm acreage owners identify threats to drinking water quality on their property. The program uses a series of fact sheets and assessments to help farmers and acreage owners identify potential water pollution sources on their property. The materials also alert users if they are in violation of Iowa law.

“We feel this is an excellent program for Iowa because it is voluntary, comprehensive and confidential,” said Rick Robinson, director of local and environmental affairs for Iowa Farm Bureau Federation.

Initial development of the program has been funded in part by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Federal Nonpoint Source Management Program. Iowa Farm Bureau Federation and Agren Inc., a consulting group located in Carroll, were awarded funding for this one-year project through DNR’s Household Hazardous Materials education grant program.

In-kind and cash matches to the project have been committed by IFBF, ISU Extension, Metro Waste Authority, Agren Inc. and various local waste management authorities.

For more information on the Iowa Farm*A*Syst program or the June 17 stakeholders’ meeting, contact Jamie Ridgely at (712) 792-6248 or jamie@agren-inc.com.